



# Bringing ground level experiences to the post-2015 global development process



**Participate**  
Knowledge from the margins for post-2015

# Bringing ground level experiences to the post-2015 global development process

## Front cover

(Top left) India

Ground Level Panel

**PRAXIS**

Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices

(Top right) Brazil

Ground Level Panel



International Movement ATD Fourth World & Raizes em Movimento

(Bottom left) Egypt

Ground Level Panel



Center for Development Services (CDS)

(Bottom right) Uganda

Ground Level Panel



Restless Development

The *Participate* Ground Level Panels created a space for people living in poverty and marginalisation to deliberate what is needed from the post-2015 global policy process. These panels gave a unique insight into how development is experienced, what needs to change, and how change must happen if it is to be sustainable. The Ground Level Panels took place in Egypt, Brazil, Uganda and India. Each panel comprised a group of 10-14 people with diverse and intersecting identities including urban slum dwellers; disabled people; sexual minorities; people living in conflict and

natural disaster-affected areas; people living in geographically isolated communities; nomadic and indigenous people; older people; internally displaced people; and young people.

Like the UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, these panels are not an attempt to represent a particular set of voices or group, but an opportunity to bring together a diversity of people with appropriate knowledge, to provide a counter-point to high-level processes of decision-making. The Ground Level Panellists hold expertise in terms of their individual and shared experiences of poverty and exclusion. The panel deliberations are grounded in the proposals of the UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The Ground Level Panels aim to build upon and challenge the content of the High Level Panel's recommendations by providing insight into the barriers and drivers of effective strategies for change, for people living in poverty and marginalisation.

This report is a synthesis of the proposals outlined by the Ground Level Panels in order to understand the global patterns and dissonances in their proposals. We draw upon the outcome documents from the panels which present recommendations for what is needed in global development policy to end poverty.



Panellist, El Hag Mohamed Abdel Qader El Sheimy shares his vision for development in Egypt

## The Ground Level Panel process

The panellists spent five days developing a new vision for development. This process took place within the framing of the UN High Level Panel's recommendations.

The Ground Level Panels employed a deliberative and participative dialogue process. Key elements included:

- Participants have support to reach a shared understanding of the issues they are deliberating over
- There is enough time to have reflective and open-ended discussion on the issues
- Opinions and positions are formed interactively in dialogue and recommendations tested to ensure mutual understanding
- Participants have ownership of the knowledge created and space to turn that knowledge into action through dialogue with external actors and policy-makers
- The knowledge is not only shared externally but also amongst themselves to be valuable for their own aims

Each panel came up with recommendations for what is needed in global development policy for it to be transformative. All of the Ground Level Panels presented recommendations at outreach days to decision-makers responsible for shaping local, national and international development policy.





Ground Level Panellists in Uganda discuss what it means to 'put sustainable development at the core' as proposed by the High Level Panel

RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT

## Summary

- People living in poverty and marginalisation are calling for a new vision for development post-2015 that ensures equal opportunities and equity for everyone through guaranteeing fundamental human rights. Post-2015 development must challenge discrimination and violence and break down barriers that people in hardship face to live dignified lives.
- To achieve this, citizens must exercise their power to shape the decisions that affect their lives and decision-makers must be transparent and accountable for their (in)actions and build meaningful relationships with the public. A post-2015 framework must be informed by local communities' experiences of poverty, insecurity and exclusion. It is critical that means for implementation, indicators and goals reflect the need to challenge the social norms amongst formal and informal institutions that perpetuate discrimination.

# Visions for transformative development

The following section outlines a number of key areas of change that resonated across the Ground Level Panels as the foundations of a transformative post-2015 development agenda.

## 1 Empowering governance responsive to all

**Empowering governance** does not discriminate or exploit. People from marginalised groups and ethnicities are able to participate in all domains of society, with equal rights and as citizens. All people are represented equally and fairly. For the Brazil panel this means reflecting the *'true desires and aspirations of the people'*. The India panel sees it as promoting *'people's participation in local governance and policy-making'* to ensure a government responsive to the poor.

It is important that there is long term investment in the capacities of communities to mobilise, collectivise and effect change. In the Uganda and Brazil panels, civil society was seen as a supportive broker between people and decision-makers; holding valuable knowledge to input into development planning and to hold institutions to account.

**All panels asserted the integral nature of transparency and accountability in governance.** Fighting corruption was an aspiration for all of the panellists. For accountability to be realised the rule of law must be enforced equally upon all members of society. People cannot live

safely or with dignity when law is enforced differentially according to position and power, or when access to justice suffers from corruption and nepotism. In Uganda, there was a strong perception that peace and effective and accountable institutions are *'deeply connected'*. Egyptian panellists put a strong emphasis on the legitimacy of individuals that take on the roles and responsibilities of representative leadership. Leaders must be *'honest, transparent, ethical, not corrupt, qualified and dedicated'*. This idea was echoed with a concern from the panel in Brazil, that once in power *'people and groups engaged in social struggles... end up corrupting themselves and putting aside their ideologies and convictions'*. The panellists in India noted the all-pervasive nature of corruption and stressed the need to establish a *'corruption-free society and state'* by measures such as ensuring transparency in the allocation of funds for public welfare.

## 2 Human rights for all

The Ground Levels Panels proposed a vision of dignity for all. Underpinning this is the fulfillment of all human rights for those living in extreme poverty and marginalisation. The panels asserted the importance of recognising all components of

Ground Level Panellists present their proposals for development to local and national decision-makers and the media in India





social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights. For the panellists the rights to food, work, education, health, housing, transport, leisure, access to land, political freedoms and economic security were all acknowledged. India's panellists called for the post-2015 development agenda 'to be written in such a way that they address all barriers that prevent everyone from realising these promises [rights]'.

For panellists in Uganda the fulfilment of human rights for all 'can only be achieved when people have peace and security in their lives' which links to the emphasis that was placed on effective and accountable governments. Brazil's panellists emphasised the need for a transformation of the mechanisms and spaces available to formally claim rights and seek redress. They explained that these processes are currently inaccessible to people who live in poverty and face marginalisation, because their legal empowerment is limited.

### 3 Peace, safety and security at every level of society

**Governments and societies should use peaceful methods** to resolve violent conflict within and between countries, maintaining respect for human rights at all times. The Egypt panellists saw a direct link between international peace and peace and security at the national level. This highlights the importance of effective conflict resolution and peace-building at all levels. In Uganda, the panel asserted that peaceful societies provide an enabling environment for good governance and the achievement of human rights. In India, the panel recognised the need for a ban on nuclear weapons and armaments in the bid to create a global enabling environment and associated stability.

In Brazil, panellists outlined the many forms of **violence, including 'physical, psychological, institutional, social and environmental', that break down the social fabric of society**. They explain that where violence destroys the bonds in a society, differences between people become more prominent, perpetuating further violence. In relation to this, the panel in Uganda called for openness and trust by all people as a way of building more stable societies. The panel in India stressed the significance of gendered violence related to **discrimination within public spaces, and families**; noting the distinctive hardship faced by women, gay and transgender people. The panellists called for promoting a **safe and secure home environment to maintain emotional well-being, especially of children**. The importance of informal 'safety-nets', mostly at the family level, were also recognised for children's development by Brazil.



Unity and respect were central to the achievement of dignity in the Brazil and Uganda panels, as outlined in Brazil: *"The realisation of these proposals ... must be hand-in-hand with the recognition of the importance of solidarity in human relations. Thus, overcoming the dehumanisation produced by a system of consumption and reinvigorating love in every human being's heart. Union and harmonious interactions in diversity are the basis for the common good"*.

Panellists describe the fundamental characteristics of Popular Education in Brazil

### 4 Holistic approach to development

A number of the panels outlined that **looking at development holistically means seeing all areas of change as interconnected**. For the Uganda and Brazil panels, people, the environment and government bodies all depend on each other, and can all be seen as part of the whole. In this relationship it is important to recognise the role of people in determining their own future. The Brazil panel stated that it is necessary to build a Global Life Plan where strategies to end extreme poverty and ensure human rights are integrated with approaches that respect the environment and the preservation of the planet's life. The panels also articulate a holistic understanding of human rights, in that human dignity is grounded in the intersecting nature of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.

At the India panel, the panellists stated that *"roti, kapda, makaan, rozi, shiksha aur swasthya humara adhikaar; aur yeh haasil karne ke liye chahiye bhagidari aur izzat"* (food, clothing, shelter, livelihood, education and health are our rights; and for that we need the right to participate and dignity).



Egypt

## 5 Fair economic opportunities and secure livelihoods

The panels were deeply concerned with **the role of the government and private sector as job creators** and their relationship with people on the ground, particularly in the communities in which they are located. The Uganda panel called for more investment in relevant jobs and building the skills needed to access them. There should also be more support for small businesses to innovate and access new markets.



Uganda

The India and Brazil panels outlined how **the current economic system exploits the labour force**. The India panel calls for systems and structures that protect workers' rights to be created and implemented, including those that regulate working conditions, and meaningful social protection mechanisms are put in place. In addition, the need was expressed to 'protect the poor farmers, agricultural labour and tribals' from the interest of wealthy corporates and mechanisms that prevent tax evasion by the wealthy.



India

**Livelihoods and education are intrinsically linked.** In Egypt the panel members explained that when people do not have a secure income they cannot afford education; a situation that highly limits their progress. Uganda panellists view education as an important platform for accessing future livelihood opportunities. However, there was a call for change around the culture of education. Through education people should build the practical skills to gain a decent livelihood. The Brazil panel promotes a form of popular education that is inclusive, builds capacity and the consciousness of men and women within their cultural diversity – *"Where they can holistically learn and teach according to their local realities, primarily using artistic culture in its most diverse forms as a social, economic, political, educational, and spiritual transformative process"*. In India, the panel suggested the need for common schools for all – including the rich and the poor, to enable inclusion of marginalised groups.



Brazil

## 6 Self-sufficiency and agency for individuals, collectives and countries

**The message of self-sufficiency was important across all of the panels**, although it came out most clearly from Egyptian panellists. Countries and communities should have sufficient resources to develop: *'the poor can fulfil their own needs'*. Uganda panellists echoed this idea; people must have the opportunity to determine their own development by having access to capacity and economic resources. The Uganda panel called for *'investors to support the communities in which*



CENTER FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Egypt Ground Level Panel meeting: Tunis Village, Fayoum

*they work, particularly where natural resources are the basis of business'.*

Egypt panellists stated that dependencies between countries and with the private sector around food and resources should be reduced as these are often unfair to those in developing country contexts.

Linked to this point, panellists in India emphasised the need to recognise the various identities of excluded and marginalised people, instead of labeling communities and providing meaningless handouts.

## 7 Equality and equity in opportunities

**Equality of opportunity** was in all panels' discussions. Across the panels it was emphasised that those that are excluded and marginalised should be recognised as equal citizens, with rights. Of particular prominence was the importance of gender equality and the empowerment of women. For the panel members in India the state has an important role in promoting equity by creating a level-playing field so that there is a fair starting point for everyone in achieving prosperity.

The **social integration of all people**, including those living in isolation and ethnic minorities, is central to building equal and inclusive societies. In India it was stated that people's identities should be respected and discrimination and stigma based on *'caste, language, disability, sexual orientation, gender, age, religion and region'* must come to an end. This involves challenging the social norms and customary traditions that perpetuate discrimination in society.

# Means of implementation

It is essential that people living in poverty and marginalisation have a role in the implementation of the post-2015 development framework and a voice in turning 'vision into action'. The process of implementation can determine whether 'development' impacts meaningfully on peoples' lives, and transforms their trajectories out of poverty.

The panels in India, Brazil, Egypt and Uganda discussed the importance of grounding the means of implementation of any development framework in people's realities. The panels came up with the following proposals:

- Local, national and international institutions must place meaningful participation at their core
- More inclusive, community-led monitoring processes must be established
- Indicators must reflect the barriers to access and underlying discriminatory practices that perpetuate poverty and marginalisation
- Institutions, governments and the private sector should increase transparency and access to information

## 1 Local, national and international institutions must place meaningful participation at their core

- a. All panellists expressed the importance of ensuring that diverse forms of knowledge are respected.
- b. Panellists emphasised the importance of enabling citizens and communities, particularly the poorest, to engage in bottom-up decision-making processes around the creation and implementation of development policies and programmes. This happens in an ongoing way.
- c. Brazil panellists warned against implementation by those detached from the reality of people in extreme hardship.
- d. The India panel proposed opening local-level institutional spaces for collective citizen action; implying a shift from the individual-based approach of development.

## 2 More inclusive, community-led monitoring processes must be established

- a. Both Brazil and Uganda's panellists advocated for a more inclusive monitoring process.

- b. The Brazil panel saw the independent, ground-level monitoring of a post-2015 framework as fundamental; a process to be guaranteed, stimulated and supported at all levels.
- c. In the Uganda panel, community monitoring was seen as necessary for any type of development programme, not only those linked to a post-2015 framework.

## 3 Indicators must reflect the barriers to access and underlying discriminatory practices that perpetuate poverty and marginalisation.

- a. All panels recognised that indicators fall short on truly reflecting the barriers to access and underlying problems that perpetuate poverty, exclusion and marginalisation.
- b. Panellists in Egypt called for inclusion of qualitative indicators that are set by the people and not external agencies.
- c. In India, panellists said poverty is an indication of government indifference and apathy and stressed that goals should be designed so they address all the (hidden) barriers that prevent people from realising the fulfilment of needs.

## 4 Institutions, governments and the private sector should increase transparency and access to information.

- a. There Brazil and India panels discussed how there should be more transparency and open access to information around the way that the state works.
- b. Indian panellists stressed the need to break the government-corporate nexus and asserted that '*information should be shared proactively*' by those who hold power as access to information becomes fundamental for people to understand their basic rights and hold institutions to account for their (in)action.
- c. The private sector must also respond for its actions, be held accountable for its impact at the community level and for its role in building equitable societies. The Uganda panel expressed a call for foreign investors to respect local customs and culture.
- d. The Uganda panellists stated that developed countries and international institutions must take responsibility for their role in climate change and violent conflict.



## Concluding remarks

The Ground Level Panels' discussions reflect the critical nature of accountability in the context of transformative social change. Accountability in the panel discussions was used to refer to the responsibilities and relationships between states and citizens, development agencies and those that policies impact, civil society organisations and their constituencies and private sector actors with their stakeholders. It is clear that for accountability to be meaningful, and to build empowering governance, the rights and dignity of people living in poverty and marginalisation must be placed at the centre of how development happens.

Institutions will only be effective, and policies will only reach those at the margins, in societies

where people are involved in the decisions that affect their lives. States need to become more accountable and responsive to citizens and panellists called for new legal frameworks and mechanisms that make accountability possible. Central to this process of change is the building of partnerships with citizens in both the decision-making and implementation of development initiatives. The panellists also emphasised the way in which rights claims by citizens can continue to transform political structures, especially where new rights are being demanded. This is important as the panellists articulated a collaboration in development where they are seen as active agents of political and social change.

### Ground Level Panel host organisations

The Ground Level Panels were hosted by four members of the *Participate* initiative's Participatory Research Group. This is a network of organisations working to bring the voices of the most marginalised and those living in greatest poverty into the post-2015 debate.



The GLP in India was hosted by Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices  
[www.praxisindia.org/](http://www.praxisindia.org/)



The GLP in Brazil was hosted by the International Movement ATD Fourth World  
[www.atd-fourthworld.org/](http://www.atd-fourthworld.org/)



and co-facilitated by Raízes em Movimento  
[www.raizesemmovimento.org.br/](http://www.raizesemmovimento.org.br/)



The GLP in Egypt was hosted by the Center for Development Services (CDS)  
[www.cds-mena.org/](http://www.cds-mena.org/)



The GLP in Uganda was hosted by Restless Development – Uganda  
[www.restlessdevelopment.org/](http://www.restlessdevelopment.org/)

If you would like to hear the experience of the GLPs from some of the panellists' voices you can listen to a song (<https://soundcloud.com/participate2015>) and watch a video created by Brazil's panel ([www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=ZfolCspvnWk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=ZfolCspvnWk)); or watch Sabah Roman Karam's story of being part of the Egypt panel (<http://vimeo.com/70297163>).



The *Participate* Initiative provides high quality evidence on the reality of poverty at ground level, bringing the perspectives of the poorest into the post-2015 global development debate. *Participate* is co-convened by the Institute of Development Studies and Beyond 2015, but the initiative is only possible because of the energy, expertise and vision of numerous organisations committed to participatory research. For more information go to: [www.participate2015.org](http://www.participate2015.org)